

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0508

February 3, 2021

The Honorable Joe Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We believe that income inequality is one of the definitive challenges facing our generation. Solving this intractable problem will require strenuous and sustained efforts from all three branches of government and cooperation between lawmakers on both sides of the aisle.

However, we are concerned by reports that your administration is considering legislation to increase the federal minimum wage to \$15, an action that would exacerbate the problem of income inequality rather than improving it. We strongly oppose raising the national minimum wage at a time when our economy is already in a fragile state from the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Economists tell us that income inequality is the result of a multitude of factors — among them, globalization, technological advancement, the efficient employment of capital, and changing institutions. In other words, low wages are a symptom of the problem of income inequality, not the root cause. And like a doctor treating a patient with cancer, we would be extremely foolish to prescribe aspirin for our patient to mask the symptom of pain while ignoring the cancer itself. This is especially true if the medication we prescribe has serious side effects. This is undeniably the case with the minimum wage.

We must remember that the real minimum wage is ZERO. That is the wage earned by Americans who are no longer able to find work under well-intentioned but ill-considered minimum wage requirements. This increase would result in the flight of jobs to other countries or the elimination of jobs due to automation. In fact, the most recent Congressional Budget Office analysis of raising the minimum wage concluded that increasing the federal minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$15 an hour will cost 1.3 million workers their jobs. At a time when our national unemployment has only just begun to recover from the economic pain imposed by the COVID-19 lockdown last year, jeopardizing the economic security of more than a million American workers is not something we can support.

It is worth noting that 29 states already have minimum wages higher than the federal floor of \$7.25. Nine of those states will have a minimum wage of \$15 under state law in the coming years.

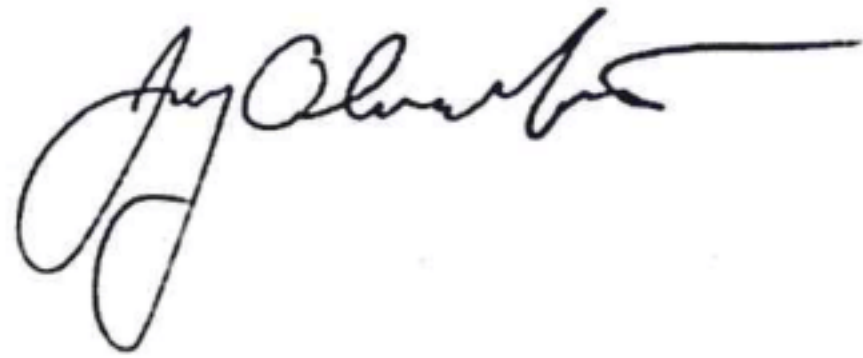
We must allow states to be the “laboratories of democracy” that our Founding Fathers intended. They are the appropriate entities to lead on this issue, as states better know the needs of their unique populations; this is a wiser decision than pinning our entire nation to a single standard that fails to reflect the differences in the cost of living across our fifty states. What is right for California is not necessarily what is right for Iowa – the minimum wage should reflect those differences.

We are also concerned that you propose to include this substantial change to federal policy in the already-complex COVID-19 relief package. If our nation truly has need to raise the minimum wage, then it should be considered separately so Congress can have a robust debate of the merits and serious risks it entails. This issue should not be swept into what will already be a massive legislative undertaking that should be focused on targeted pandemic relief.

We believe strongly in ensuring that our workers have every opportunity to achieve the American Dream. Most economists agree that raising the minimum wage will result in fewer entry-level jobs and decreased economic mobility for American workers. Drastically increasing the federal minimum wage will only hurt the very people we purport to help.

Thank you for your consideration on this matter.

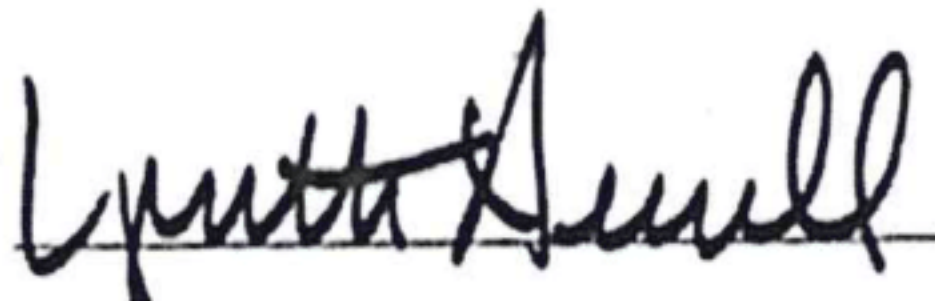
Sincerely,



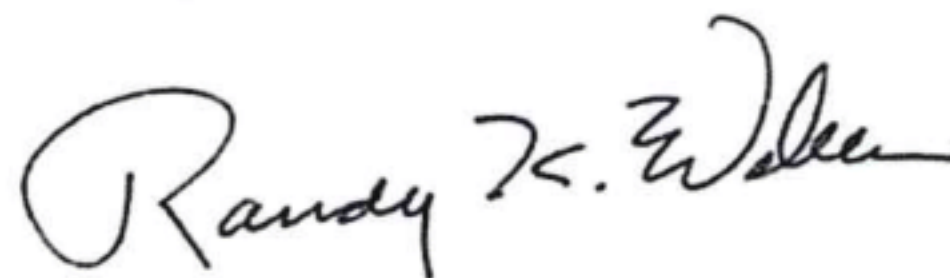
Jay Obernolte
Member of Congress



Ashley Hinson
Member of Congress



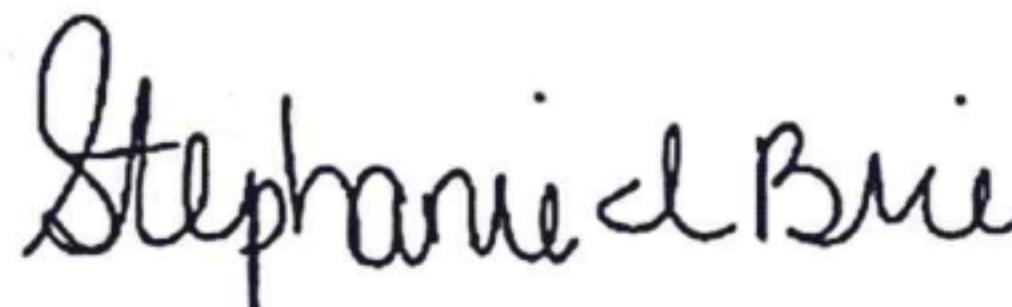
Yvette Herrell
Member of Congress



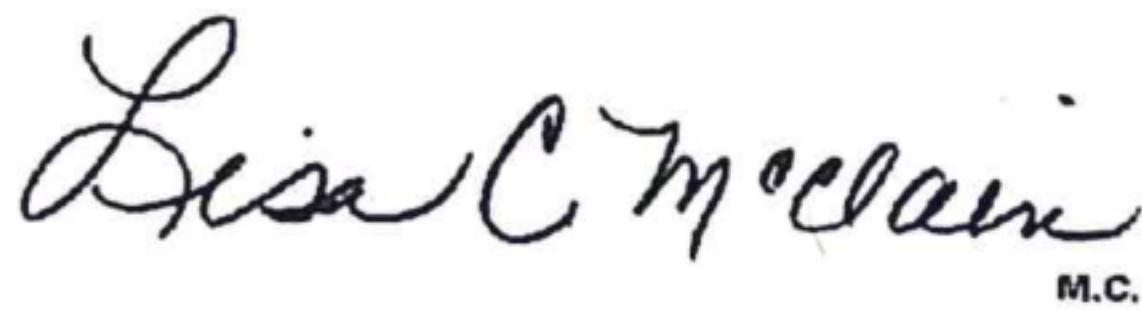
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Member of Congress



David Valadao
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Stephanie Bice
Member of Congress



Lisa McClain
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Barry Moore
Member of Congress



Greg Steube
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Marjorie Taylor Greene
Member of Congress



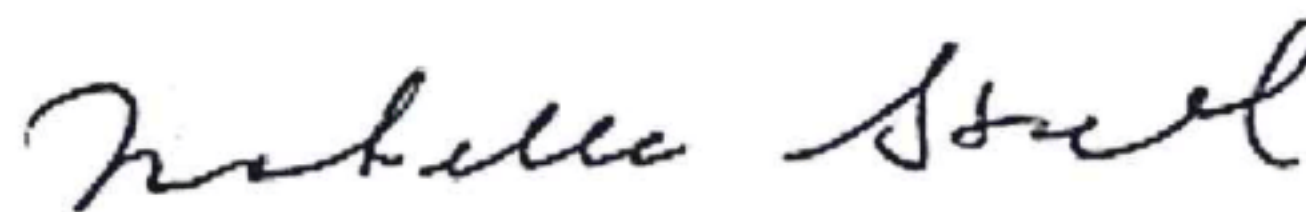
Brian Babin
Member of Congress



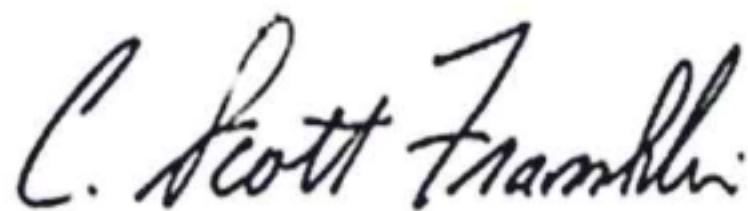
Austin Scott
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Scott Franklin
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Ron Estes
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COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

WASHINGTON, DC 20515

February 9, 2021

Mr. Brian Deese
Director of National Economic Council
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Deese:

We write to ask that you provide an estimate by the Biden Administration (not an outside third party) on the number of jobs expected to be created by the President's proposed \$1.9 trillion Covid-relief legislation. We ask that you deliver this estimate prior to the House vote on the upcoming Budget Reconciliation legislation.

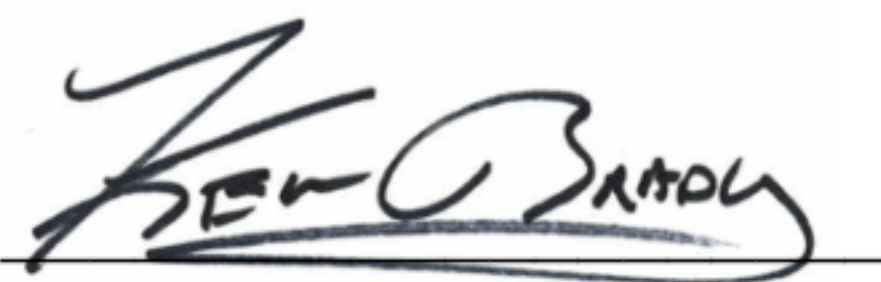
The global pandemic and related economic lockdowns have led to a significant increase in unemployment across the country. While the federal government has already spent approximately \$3.5 trillion dollars to provide relief to struggling Americans, we should not lose sight of the fact that those that are struggling due to the pandemic are largely struggling due to job loss. Therefore, it is absolutely essential that any additional relief be effectively and efficiently targeted towards creating jobs and getting Americans safely back to work.

As you know, prior to economic lockdowns beginning in March 2020 due to the global pandemic, America's employment situation was incredibly strong. The unemployment rate in February 2020 was at a 50 year low of 3.5%. Unemployment rates were also at historic lows for Black or African Americans at 6.0%, Asian Americans at 2.4%, and Hispanic or Latino Americans at 4.4%.

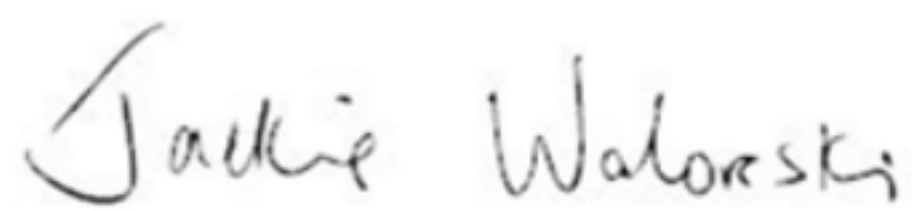
Returning to pre-pandemic employment levels requires policies focused on creating new jobs, protecting existing jobs, and reconnecting workers with their employers. We are very concerned that many policies currently being proposed will be complete job killers. Please provide the Administration's estimate of how many jobs its \$1.9 trillion package would create if enacted. This data is essential for members of Congress to have in advance of voting on any proposed Covid-relief legislation.

We appreciate your attention and look forward to your response. If you have any questions, please contact Ways and Means Committee Republican staff at (202) 225-4021.

Sincerely,



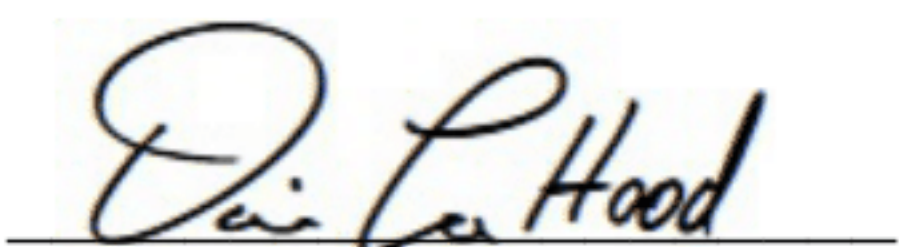
Kevin Brady
Ranking Member
Committee on Ways and Means



Jackie Walorski
Member of Congress



Devin Nunes
Member of Congress



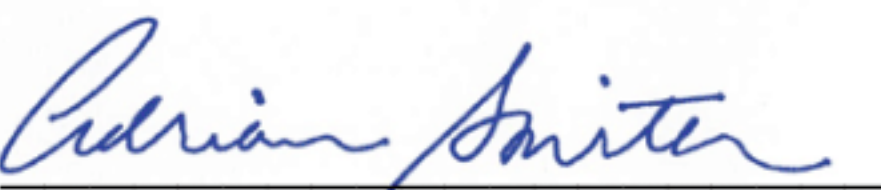
Darin LaHood
Member of Congress



Vern Buchanan
Member of Congress



Brad Wenstrup
Member of Congress



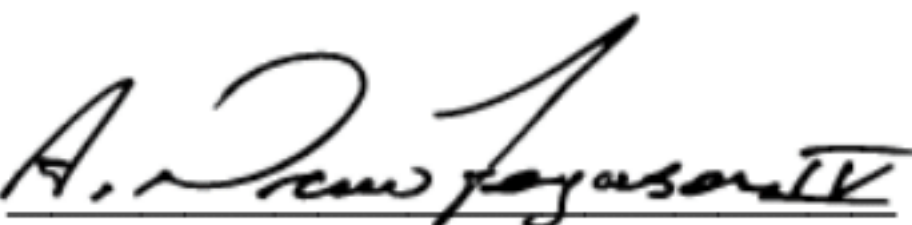
Adrian Smith
Member of Congress



Jodey Arrington
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Tom Reed
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Drew Ferguson
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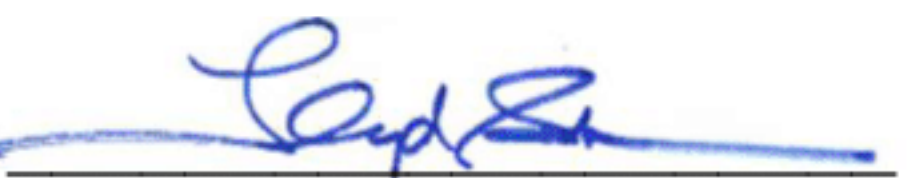
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